Post-Secondary Transition with WI Facets and Avoiding the Cliff Edge of No Supports

Explore the critical transition process as individuals approach age 21, when supports can suddenly disappear. Learn strategies to navigate this "transition abyss" and ensure a smooth path forward.

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Samantha Bear

A seasoned educator with over 16 years of experience in the disability field, Sam brings a wealth of perspectives from her work in public schools, transition programs, higher education, and the nonprofit sector.

Sam holds a bachelor's degree in Cross-Categorical education for individuals with disabilities ages 12-21+ and an Autism Spectrum Disorder specialty certificate from UW-Milwaukee.

She also has a Master's in Education from Loyola University Chicago and is currently working on her Doctorate of Education at Alverno College.

Statistics and Data

Transition Process

The transition process for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) is a critical period that often begins around age 14 and extends to age 21, when their Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) ends.

Legislation

Comprehensive legislation, such as the Higher Education Opportunities Act and Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act, has aimed to enhance support and accessibility for this population.

Challenges

Despite progress, challenges persist, such as uneven implementation, heavy teacher workloads, and limited family engagement.

Solution

Continued collaboration and a student-centered approach are crucial to ensuring effective transition planning and outcomes for individuals with IDD.
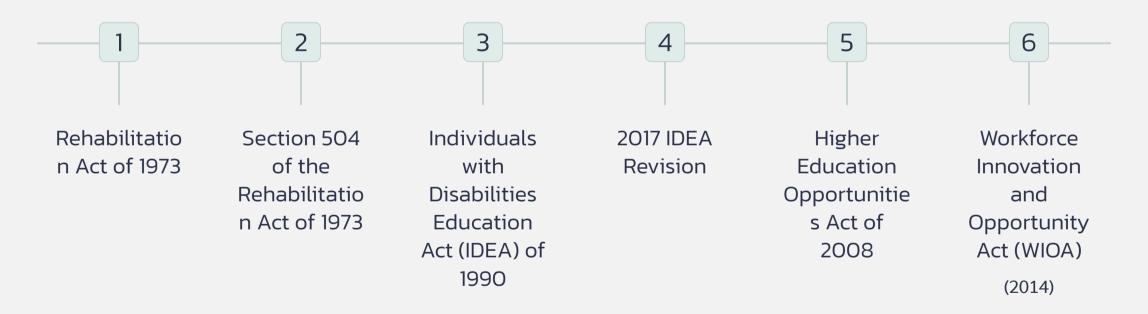
"The Transition Abyss"

Transition planning begins at age 16, but the lack of adequate preparation throughout secondary schooling can lead to a devastating "transition abyss" for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

The mandated support under IDEA ends when schooling does, shifting to eligibility-based adult services that are not guaranteed and often lack funding. This creates significant challenges as families navigate this new, uncharted territory.

Legislation

1	2	3	4	5	6
Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990	2017 IDEA Revision	Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (2014)

Evidence–Based Practice

Early Planning

Beginning transition planning as early as age 14 allows ample time for students with IDD to develop the necessary skills and knowledge for successful transitions. This early start ensures that their IEPs are well-developed and support their individual needs and goals. This can also prevent a "transition abyss" where individuals are unprepared and struggle to navigate the transition process. By starting early, individuals can gain a sense of ownership and participate in making informed decisions about their future.

Interagency Collaboration

Collaboration between schools, families, vocational rehabilitation, and community organizations is essential for creating a comprehensive support network for individuals with IDD. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility, ensuring that individuals receive the support they need throughout their transition journey. The transition process often involves working with multiple agencies and coordinating their services to meet the individual's specific needs. For example, the school may work with the vocational rehabilitation agency to help the individual find a job and with the community organizations to provide them with independent living skills.

Student–Focused

Transition plans should be centered around the individual's interests, needs, and strengths. This approach emphasizes student choice and self-determination, allowing individuals to take an active role in their transition journey and shape their future. When transition plans are individualized, they are more likely to be successful. A student-focused approach encourages the individual to be actively involved in the transition planning process, ensuring that their voice is heard and their preferences are considered.

Independent Living

Training in practical skills, such as budgeting and household management, is crucial for individuals with IDD to foster self-sufficiency and autonomy. This enables them to live more fulfilling and independent lives. This includes learning about financial literacy, managing household finances, and navigating community resources. The goal is to equip them with the tools and knowledge to thrive in their chosen post-secondary pathways.

Kohler et al.'s Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0

Student-Focused Planning

This category focuses on developing individualized transition plans driven by the student's interests and needs.

Student Development

This category includes practices that support the development of academic, social, emotional, and occupational skills.

Interagency Collaboration

This category emphasizes the importance of collaboration between schools, families, and community agencies to ensure that students receive a coordinated and comprehensive transition plan.

Family Engagement

This category includes practices that support the involvement of families in the transition planning process.

Program Structure

This category focuses on developing a supportive school environment promoting student success.

Best Transition Practices

Collaborative Coordination

Effective transition planning requires ongoing coordination and communication between educators, families, community agencies, and the students themselves.

Early and Continuous Planning

Starting transition planning early, and maintaining focus on future goals throughout secondary education, helps prevent the "cliff edge" when support ends.

Holistic Development

Preparing students should include not just academic skills, but also social, emotional, and independent living skills to promote overall well-being.

Q&A Time

Now is the time for questions and discussion. Participants are encouraged to share their own experiences, challenges, and insights related to the transition planning process for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

By engaging in an open dialogue, we can learn from one another and identify effective strategies to better support students and families during this critical life stage.